

## The Two Lords

"God has made him both Lord and Messiah—this Yeshua."

(Acts 2:36)

"No one can say, 'Yeshua is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit."

(1 Corinthians 12:3)

"We preach Messiah Yeshua as Lord."

(2 Corinthians 4:5)

by [Paul Sumner](#)

The Hebrew Bible has two words commonly translated "Lord" in English. By distinguishing the two, readers will see a key messianic thread running into the New Testament.

At least 100 times in the NT Yeshua is called "**Lord Yeshua**." Hundreds of other times he is "the Lord Yeshua Messiah" or simply "Lord."

One of his more famous statements about himself is: "The Son of Man is the **Lord of the Sabbath**" (Luke 6:5). After his death, his disciples went to fellow Jews, "preaching peace through Yeshua Messiah—he is **Lord of all**" (Acts 10:36). With Greeks, the message was the same: they were "preaching the **Lord Yeshua**" (Acts 11:20).

ישוע הוא האֲדוֹן  
Yeshua he (is) the Lord

Yeshua as "Lord" was also a central teaching of Saul of Tarsus (Paul the apostle). He too urged people to "confess with your mouth: **Yeshua is Lord**" (Rom 10:9). One day, in the future, he says, every living being in the universe will "confess that **Yeshua Messiah is Lord**, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:10-11).

What did Yeshua's followers mean by calling him "Lord"? What did the word denote and connote in Jewish minds? The Hebrew text of Psalm 110:1 provides an answer.

[\[Top\]](#)

## The "Lords" in Psalm 110

נָאִם יְהוָה לְאֲדֹנָי שֵׁב לְיָמִינִי  
עַד-אֲשִׁית אֲבִיךָ הָרֵם לְרַגְלֶיךָ

The LORD said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand  
Until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.

This passage is the most quoted text from the Hebrew Bible in the entire New Testament—more than Isaiah 53 or Psalm 22.

Traditionally, most English Bibles print "the LORD" (one large and three small capital letters) to stand for **YHVH**, the name of God, when it occurs in the Hebrew text. This is the Tetragrammaton or Name of "Four Letters" (transliterated by some as YaHWeH and JeHoVaH). [For more on this, see [HaShem—The Name.](#)]

יהוה  
YHVH  
אֲדֹנָי  
adon

The second "Lord" (printed with one capital letter) is **Adon**. (Some Bible translators don't capitalize "Lord" in this verse, depending on how they interpret the **adon's** identity. Hebrew itself does not have capital and small letters.) [[Note 1](#)]

**Adon** means master, sovereign, lord, even husband. It is most often used for human males (Sarah calls husband Abraham her "lord"; Gen 18:12. David calls Saul his "lord"; 1 Sam 24:6. Ruth calls Boaz "my lord"; Ruth 2:14).

Several times **Adon** is used for God (Exod 23:17; Isa 1:24; Ps 8:2). He is "Lord of lords" (Deut 10:17; Ps 136:3) and "Lord of all the earth" (Jos 3:11, 13; Mic 4:13; Zech 4:14; 6:5; Ps 97:5).

[[Top](#)]

## Who is the Adon?

*YHVH said to my Adon . . .*

The **Adon** in Psalm 110:1 has royal status with God. He is invited to sit with God. To "sit" means to be enthroned as ruler. In verse 4 he also has priestly status—"you are a priest forever"—even though he wasn't born into and descend from the priestly line of Levi.

### Adon David

In the Hebrew Bible is a constellation of ideas sometimes called "[David Theology](#)."

It centers around David ben Jesse of Bethlehem and it spans most of the Scriptures. In fact, **David is the central human character in the Hebrew Bible**. More attention is given to him than to Moses. And, according to the prophets, Israel's national destiny lies with another, future David (Hosea 3:5; Ezek 37:24-25; Isa 55:3), not a second Moses.

King David and his descendants who ruled from Jerusalem were thought to share God's throne as His representatives on earth. They and David were princes, symbolically sitting next to the "Great King" (Ps 48:2).

We hear David express this idea himself. Just before dying, he tells his people that God "has chosen my son Solomon **to sit on the throne of the kingdom of YHVH** over Israel" (1 Chron 28:5). At the coronation ceremony, the narrator then notes, "Solomon sat on **the throne of YHVH** as king" (1 Chron 29:23).

[[Top](#)]

The **Adon** in verse 1 of Psalm 110 could refer to David himself or to one of his grandsons entitled to assume the role of headship over God's kingdom. The lack of specific identification intriguingly opens the window for making links to any Davidic leader in the future.

The "my" in "my Adon" could refer to the psalmist. Or it could be David himself standing by and witnessing the scepter pass to his successor, his Adon-Son Solomon. Or, thirdly, it might be the last Davidic king Zedekiah, who peered into the future beyond the fall of the House of David in 586 BC. and saw a distant "David."

Paradoxically, the branches of David's tree did not forever perish even though his dynasty ended. The prophets predicted a "Branch" or "Shoot" of his fallen tree would rise in the future (Amos 9:11; Isa 11:1; 53:2; Jer 23:5).

[\[Top\]](#)

## Daniel and Psalm 110

The striking, symbolic passage [Daniel 7:9-14](#) apparently depicts the coronation of a future David, though the names "David" or "Messiah" are not used. In this visionary scene, a human-like "son of man" [Aramaic, **bar enash**] is escorted into the heavenly council chambers where the Ancient of Days and his "court" wait.

The **Ancient of Days** gives to this unnamed **Bar Enash** authority to rule the entire world, from his shared throne of a kingdom "which will not be destroyed" (v. 14). This granting of sovereignty echoes the messianic Psalm 72, in which "David" will rule "to the ends of the earth" and "all nations will serve him."

The Jewish translators of the pre-1st century Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (the Septuagint) might have seen a link between this Danielic imagery of a coronation/power-bestowal in the heavenly realm and God's invitation in Psalm 110 to his Lord to assume co-power with him.

[\[Top\]](#)

In **Psalm 110:3** in the Septuagint [LXX 109:3], God says to his right-hand Lord:

Among the splendors of the holy ones,  
Before the dawn I have begotten you.

A few Hebrew manuscripts also have "**I have begotten you.**" The medieval Masoretic text has something like "yours was the dew of youth." Some historians believe the LXX follows the original Hebrew version, which was later changed by the Masoretes to suppress a proof-text used by Yeshua's disciples.

Inaugurating a king into office is like a father begetting a son. This lord's inauguration takes place in the heavens, "before the dawn" (of creation, of history, of the final age?).

This phrase echoes Psalm 2:7b:

He said to me, "You are my son,  
Today I have begotten you."  
[Quoted in Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5]

The emergence of human kings in Israel creates a dual monarchy in Hebrew Scripture. There are now two "Lords" in ancient Israel: God himself and his co-ruling David on earth. As a result, for Yeshua to appropriate to himself the title of **Adon** from Psalm 110:1 was a known messianic interpretation.

[\[Top\]](#)

## Two Lords in the NT

Psalm 110:1 was important to Yeshua. He quoted it during his "Messianic Identity" discussions with the Pharisees (Matt 22:41-46). Then during his interrogation by Caiaphas he alluded to both Psalm 110 and to imagery in Daniel 7 (Matt 26:62-66).

Following Yeshua's teaching example, the psalm passage became a central proof-text in the preaching of the Jewish apostles. [[See list of Psalm 110 occurrences in the NT.](#)] In fact, this verse is the most often quoted and referenced Hebrew Bible text in all the NT (Dan 7:9-14 comes in second).

By calling Yeshua "Lord," the apostles were saying he was God's Adon — not YHVH, God the Father. Notice Paul's word order in this passage:

As you have therefore received Messiah Yeshua **the Lord**,  
so walk in him. (Col 2:6)

[\[Top\]](#)

Yeshua emphasizes his title in Matthew 22:41-46: he is the **Adon Messiah** who has kingdom authority given by God (the Ancient of Days).

His **Adon**-ship dominates the NT.

Today in the city of David there has been born for you a savior,  
who is **Messiah the Lord**. (Luke 2:11)

The word which he sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace  
through Yeshua Messiah (he is **Lord of all**) (Acts 10:36)

No one can say, "**Yeshua is Lord**," except by the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor 12:3)

[\[Top\]](#)

## Lord Messiah and Lord God

(1) The title "Lord" (Greek, kurios) is typically used to distinguish Yeshua from "God." This is clear from the salutations and benedictions in NT letters . "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Yeshua Messiah" (Rom 1:7). See a complete list: [Rom 1:7](#); [1 Cor 16:23](#); [Jacob 1:1](#); [2 Peter 1:2](#).

The Father is "the God...of our Lord Yeshua" (Rom 15:6; 2 Cor 1:3; Eph 1:17).

The typical banner of NT faith is: "There is one God, the Father...and one Lord, Yeshua Messiah" (1 Cor 8:6).

(2) In some places in the NT, "Lord" [kurios] stands for the Tetragrammaton. [Note 2]

Blessed be **the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited his people ...**  
to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to our father  
Abraham. (Zechariah's blessing, Luke 1:68, 72-73)

Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away,  
in order that times of refreshing may come **from the presence of the Lord;**  
and **that he may send Yeshua, the Messiah** appointed for you.  
(Peter's sermon, Acts 3:19-20)

The kingdom of this world has become **the kingdom of our Lord and of his  
Messiah;** and he will reign forever and ever. (Witnesses in heaven,  
Rev 11:15)

[Top]

(3) At times, Hebrew Bible texts that refer to YHVH are applied to the Lord, Yeshua:

**A1:**  
Whoever **calls on the name of YHVH** will be delivered.  
(Joel 2:32=3:5 Heb)

**A2:**  
There is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord  
is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon him,  
for whoever will **call upon the name of the Lord** will be delivered.  
(Rom 10:12-13)

**B1:**  
For YHVH your God is the God of gods and the **Lord** [pl. adonim]  
**of lords...** (Deut 10:17a)

**B2:**  
. . . the Lamb will overcome them because he is **Lord** [sg. kurios] **of lords**  
and King of kings. . .  
And on his robe and on his thigh he has a name written:  
King of kings and **Lord of lords.** (Rev 17:14b; 19:16)

[Top]

Here's the paradox.

Though the Messiah is not YHVH, he in some way manifests God's presence on earth. (Paul calls Yeshua "the image of the invisible God"; 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15.) An inseparable bond exists between the two Lords. Angels praise both God and Yeshua (Rev 5:13). They share one throne (Rev 22:1).

This bond is seen when ancient Hebrew priests who gave Torah-decisions were called "God" (Exod 21:6); when King David was called "the angel of

God" (2 Sam 14:17, 20); and when the prophets spoke they said, "Thus says the LORD" (Jer 2:2).

So too, when Yeshua exercises authority as God's Adon, it is as though the LORD God is ruling through him.

[\[Top\]](#)

Yeshua is **like** the priests and David and the prophets. But he is more than they.

Yeshua said he came in God's name (John 5:43; 17:6). ("**Yeshua**" means in Hebrew "YHVH saves.") Through him, the God of the patriarchs—the God of the ancestral faith of Israel, the one who anointed David as co-ruling Adon—has established his kingship over humanity and continues to rule to this day by Yeshua's hand.

As the present-day ruler of the Kingdom, "he must reign until [God] has put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Cor 15:25). That is, "until the times of the Restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21).

### Summary & Importance

(1) Distinguishing the two Lords of Psalm 110:1 sheds light on the existence of [David Theology](#) and on the expectation that a future David would serve as God's representative **Adon** on earth. We might say that the first David was moonlight, while the last David will bring the full brightness of the sun.

(2) The NT applies the Davidic-Messianic palette of Psalm 110:1 to Yeshua. He and his disciples focused on this text and on [Daniel 7:9-14](#) as their way of describing his position, role, or status with God. Had they intended to argue that Yeshua was YHVH God himself, there was no point in emphasizing he was YHVH's **Adon**.

During his interrogation by Caiaphas the high priest, Yeshua alluded to both Psalm 110 and Daniel 7. In response, Caiaphas accused him of blasphemy. But he wasn't guilty, because the Scriptures stood unalterable. Caiaphas could hardly reject them. But he chose to reject this **particular man** for applying them to himself. He might also have dismissed Yeshua because he didn't honor him as God's high priest (Matthew 26:62-68).

(3) Some Christians misunderstand the title "Lord" when used for Jesus, by assuming it's identical to the Hebrew name "LORD" (YHVH). They thus conclude that Jesus is "Jehovah" in the Old Testament. If they were taught the distinction in the Hebrew text of Psalm 110:1 and how this verse is used in the NT to emphasize the Two Lords, this error would disappear.

• [Paul Sumner](#)

[\[Top\]](#)

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## Notes

1. Adon is used for: **God** (400+ times). Examples:

Joshua 3:11—Behold the ark of the covenant of the Lord [Adon] of all the earth...

Malachi 3:1—Then suddenly the Lord [Adon] you are seeking will come to his temple.

Psalm 8:1—O LORD [YHVH], our Lord [Adon], how majestic is your name in all the earth.

**Humans** (300+ times). Examples:

Genesis 18:12—Sarah laughed to herself . . . Shall I have pleasure, my lord [adon] being old also?

Genesis 24:48—I praised the LORD [YHVH], the God of my master [adon] Abraham...

Genesis 45:9—God has made me [Joseph] Lord [adon] of all Egypt...

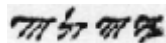
[\[Top\]](#)

In passages where **Adon** and **YHVH** are joined, modern translators usually render the pair as "the Lord GOD"—the small caps on "God" representing the divine name. For this pairing, the NIV prints "the Sovereign LORD" (Exodus 34:23; Deuteronomy 9:26; Isaiah 49:22; 61:1; Psalm 71:5; 73:28). [\[Return to Text\]](#)

2. In most of the extant versions of the Septuagint, the name of God (YHVH) has been replaced by the generic Greek word **kurios** (lord, master), which is also used for **adon**. Thus Psalm 110:1 (numbered 109:1 in the Septuagint) reads:

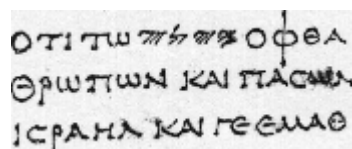
ΕΙΠΕΝ Ο ΚΥΡΙΟΣ ΤΩ ΚΥΡΙΩ ΜΟΥ  
ΕΙΠΕΝ Ο ΚΥΡΙΟΣ ΤΟ ΚΥΡΙΟ ΜΟΥ  
The **Kurios** said to my **Kurios** . . .

However, in Septuagint text fragments found in caves near the Dead Sea, **YHVH** is often printed in Paleo-Hebrew letters.



[\[Top\]](#)

Note in the next sample how the Name is printed in the first line of a fragment of Zechariah 9:1-2 in Greek, dating to the time of the Bar Kokhba Revolt (early 2nd cent. CE). It's from Nahal Hever Cave 8, a site between Qumran and Masada. [\[Return to Text\]](#)



[\[Top\]](#)